



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

HLTA Sets The Stage For A Fabulous 2018

It was another record year for visitor arrivals — the sixth consecutive for Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association. The hospitality industry demonstrated vigor as we welcomed new lodging properties and allied members. In addition, it was the 70th anniversary of HLTA. Furthermore, the accomplishments of our anniversary year will set the stage for 2018, to wit:

- In January, HLTA recognized the best-of-the-best of the hospitality industry through our annual Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards. We'll greet the new year with our 28th annual awards program, where we'll be adding more honorees to our rolls because the nominees will represent small, medium, and large properties.

- We introduced our Generational Mentoring class in 2016, in which a dozen students from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Hawai'i Pacific University and Brigham Young University-Hawai'i mentored under general managers of top hotels statewide. It's proven so successful that when we kicked off the 2017-18 class in December, we expanded participation to 15 students and general managers, and are now including UH's West O'ahu campus.

- Public safety is one of the most significant, if unspoken, travel qualities that appeals to visitors. We are one of the safest destinations in the world, and we plan to keep it that way. Toward that end, HLTA will host a Visitors Crime Workshop in February in partnership with major stakeholders. The gathering will take a page from the Visitors Crime Solutions Conference, which I spearheaded as a city



The author poses for a photo with Waipahu High School principal Keith Hayashi, a much-sought-after speaker on education throughout the Pacific region.

PHOTO COURTESY PACIFIC CENTURY FELLOWS' MARIANAS CHAPTER

councilman in 1998 that led to outcomes such as the Waikiki Business Improvement District Association and Aloha Ambassadors.

- In March, we'll inaugurate the aio Media Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Awards event at Hawai'i Convention Center. We'll recognize achievers in various categories, including accommodations, restaurants, music, culture and agritourism.

- We'll host the 14th annual Citizen-Scholar Awards in April in conjunction with *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* and the state Department of Education. The awards recognize one outstanding senior from every public high school in Hawai'i, and presents each of those students with a \$1,000 scholarship. The top Citizen-Scholar from each county receives an additional \$2,500 award.

- May marks the 40th anniversary of the annual Charity

Walk. The 2017 statewide walk raised a record-breaking \$2.7 million, all of which went to local charitable organizations. Participating member hotels and businesses also hold a number of fundraising events to raise money, and the goal again this year is to top the previous year's total.

HLTA has stepped up its public policy and political action initiatives. On the legislative policy front, we'll continue to push for the creation of the long-overdue airport corporation; regulation of transient vacation rentals to ensure parity, transparency, accountability and enforcement, thereby leading to the collection of taxes from those who are not paying; and greater state assistance to combat homelessness in tourism-impacted areas. From a political perspective, HLTA held the first Honolulu mayoral candidates forum during the

2016 election, and we plan to stage a couple of similar events at the Hawai'i Lodging, Hospitality & Foodservice Expo in July at the Blaisdell, a month before the primary election.

In that vein, HLTA is ramping up its candidate endorsement in anticipation of the 2018 elections. We will be active in increasing candidates' exposure within the hospitality industry by inviting endorsed candidates to speak to our members and provide other opportunities for candidates to solidify support. This year, we will invite our slate of endorsed candidates to our general membership meeting to address us. Our 190th annual GMM at Turtle Bay last October, which featured past and present elected officials with a proven track record in tourism, was extremely well-received by our membership.

Altogether, the HLTA's 70th anniversary will be the catalyst for continued growth of our association as a leader and voice for the tourism industry into the years ahead.

Model Student, Principal

From Waipahu High School, its dynamic leader, principal Keith Hayashi, has done it again with another inspiring story about an individual student who has overcome adversity in her personal life to succeed.

Waipahu senior Rovy Anne Dipaysa is the first Early College student in the state to receive her high school diploma from Waipahu this year, as well as her associate degree from Leeward Community College. That's quite an accomplishment for a young woman who immigrated to

Hawai'i from the Philippines.

The HLTA recognized Waipahu two years ago at our Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards for its contributions to education, as evident by the success of the instructors at the school's tourism academy and cu-

linary academy academic programs. Keith is a sterling example of the exceptional educators in our public schools who are building the leaders of tomorrow.

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Sunday	Closed